



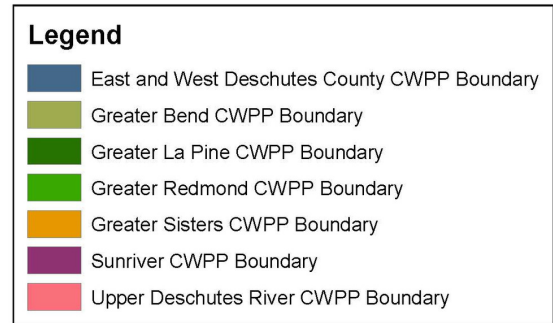
COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS IN DESCHUTES COUNTY: A SUMMARY

WILDFIRE IN DESCHUTES COUNTY

Deschutes County has experienced many large fires and the landscape has a long history with wildfire. Two of the most notable fires that caused structure loss occurred in the 1990's. Combined, the Awbrey Hall and Skeleton fires charred over 20,000 acres and destroyed 52 homes. Each year in Deschutes County fire resources respond to hundreds of small brush fires, as well as many that are larger, that threaten the lives and property of residents throughout the County.

Beginning in the early 2000's, Deschutes County and Project Wildfire partnered with local communities to develop seven distinct, tailored Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). The plans were collaboratively designed by community members, elected officials, local government representatives, fire resources from local, state and federal agencies, and other interested individuals. Project Wildfire acts as the caretaker of the seven Deschutes County Community Wildfire Protection Plans and facilitates the collaborative revision of each plan on a 5-year cycle.

DESCHUTES COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN BOUNDARIES



WHAT IS A CWPP?

Fire cannot be excluded from fire-adapted forests



Wildfire threatens people and homes across the U.S. When homes are built in and around forests, they become part of the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

Much of the WUI occurs in fire-adapted ecosystems, which requires fire to be healthy. For much of the 20th century, an aggressive and successful effort suppressed most wildfires. However, fire cannot be excluded from fire-adapted ecosystems forever. Now dense, unhealthy landscapes have created a hazard for people living in the WUI,

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a strategic plan typically developed by the local fire department, federal and state land managers, local governments, and communities.

A CWPP is developed to guide wildfire mitigation at all scales and land ownership.

Each CWPP is designed for and by a specific community's needs which drive decisions and designations about scale, approach, an area of emphasis, and depth.

CWPP's are designed to mitigate and prepare for wildfire risk and recommend actions including fuels treatments, road improvements, evacuation planning, and prescribed fire to reduce risks.

CWPP's are important in facilitating community engagement in wildfire risk reduction and preparedness and are used to set a broad array of priorities.

A CWPP is a collaborative plan used to guide wildfire mitigation and facilitate fire adapted communities.

WHY DO WE NEED CWPPS

The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) emphasized the need for federal agencies to work collaboratively with communities in the wildland urban interface (WUI) in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects to reduce the risk from large-scale wildfire. HFRA provides communities with a tremendous opportunity to influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands and how additional federal funds may be distributed for projects on nonfederal lands. A CWPP is the most effective way to take advantage of the opportunity and is required for many federal grants for fuel reduction projects on private lands.

In the context of HFRA, a CWPP offers a variety of benefits to communities at risk from wildland fire. Among those benefits is the opportunity to establish a localized, tailored definition and boundary for the WUI. At least 50 percent of all funds appropriated for projects under the HFRA must be used within the WUI as defined by the local CWPP document. This allows for communities to inform priority treatment areas on federal lands within their approved WUI Boundary; in essence it gives the community members a collective voice in where fuel reduction should be prioritized on federal lands.

The CWPP acts as a vehicle to not only promote work on public lands but to educate and empower private landowners to take preparedness steps well ahead of fire season. Within the document, there are recommendations to reduce structural ignitability, create defensible space, and evacuation preparedness information.



There are 3 minimum requirements that need to be in place according to HFRA:

- **Collaboration:** A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local & state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies & other interested parties.
- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and the essential infrastructure.
- **Structural ignitability:** A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

Even though CWPPs are not governing documents and do not require action, HFRA does require agreement by the applicable local government, local fire department, and the state agencies responsible for forest management for the CWPP to be recognized by the federal land management agencies.



THE STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CWPP



- 1 Convene Decisionmakers.** Form a core team made up of representatives from the appropriate local governments, local fire authority, and state agency responsible for forest management.
- 2 Involve Federal Agencies.** Identify and engage local representatives of the USFS & BLM. Contact and involve other land management agencies as appropriate.
- 3 Engage Interested Parties.** Contact and encourage active involvement in plan development from a broad range of interested organizations and stakeholders.



- 4 Establish a Community Base Map.** Work with partners to establish a baseline map of the community that defines the community's WUI and displays areas at risk, forested areas critical human infrastructure, and areas at risk for large-scale fire disturbance.
- 5 Develop a Community Risk Assessment.** Work with partners to develop a community risk assessment that considers fuel hazards; risk of wildfire occurrence; home, businesses, and infrastructure at risk; other community values at risk; and local preparedness capability. Rate the level of risk for each factor and incorporate into the base map.



- 6 Establish Community Priorities and Recommendations.** Use the base map and community risk assessment to facilitate a collaborative community discussion that leads to the identification of local priorities for fuel treatment, reducing structural ignitability, and other issues of interest, such as improving fire response capability.



- 7 Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy.** Consider developing a detailed implementation strategy to accompany the CWPP, as well as a monitoring plan that will ensure its long term success.
- 8 Finalize Community Wildfire Protection Plan.** Finalize the CWPP and communicate the results to community and key partners.

RISK ASSESSMENT



For a CWPP to achieve its purpose, the risk within the CWPP Boundary needs to be captured. By performing a risk assessment, the CWPP group is then able to prioritize the areas for treatment and education.

Each area within Deschutes County uses a risk assessment methodology from Oregon Department of Forestry to ensure that the risk is considered in a consistent way across boundaries. The assessment process considers all lands and ownerships; as well as collaboratively considers the complexity of ownership patterns, resource management issues, and stakeholder interests. Modeling, vegetation conditions, and local knowledge are used to inform the risk in each area within each plan.

The risk is considered in each of the seven CWPPs by a rated suite of factors. Some of those factors include, but are not limited to:

- Number of homes (density)
- How often fires occur (fire occurrence)
- Weather
- Fire Response capacity
- Community Preparedness
- Amount of vegetation (Fire Fuels)
- Infrastructure present (schools, churches, main roadways, etc.)
- Structural ignitability (roofing, road width, road conditions, etc.)

All of Deschutes County's plans are now on a cyclical revision schedule (5 year cycle). By utilizing the same risk assessment template each time, the CWPP groups can see if priorities change and if there are new focus areas in each revision.

ACTION PLANS

In each CWPP action plan, the targets for each landscape are broken into three distinct goals: Resilient landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Effective Wildfire Response. CWPPs act as an ideal document to outline concrete benchmarks and action plans on how those goals are to be achieved by the local community at all scales.



Fire Adapted Communities

A fire adapted community takes preventative and proactive action to reduce the risk of wildfire by using collaborative partnerships to develop and implement a CWPP that will guide home preparedness, healthy forests land management, business resilience, fire department planning and government participation in fuel mitigation and community resilience.

A local CWPP guides action to implement safety measures and fuel management to protect residents, homes, businesses, natural areas, and cultural resources against wildfires. A fire-adapted community takes a role in the planning, implementation, and

periodic updating of the CWPP that will guide their appropriate risk management strategies. Community members engage their neighbors to participate in fire mitigation strategies in order to adequately prepare the community against the threat of wildfire.

All of the CWPPs in Deschutes County highlight what action residents and community decision makers can take to increase the ability for all lands to be more adapted to the impacts of wildland fire.

Resilient Landscapes

Resilient Landscapes are landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives. Wildland fire plays a critical role in shaping the landscapes throughout North America and in Deschutes County. Nearly all of the native vegetation types historically burned at varying intensities and frequencies. Due to past practices, the time between fire occurrences on the landscapes have lengthened which can lead to more severe fire behavior due to the fuel load. Substantive shifts in vegetation away from fire-adapted species are also occurring.



By creating landscapes that are healthy, communities will have a better opportunity to adapt to the impacts of fire. A strategic approach to landscape health and community resiliency will lessen the harmful effects of wildfire. CWPP creation and maintenance facilitates resilient landscape project implementation through local prioritization by the collaborative CWPP group. The landscape treatments are typically prioritized adjacent to the built environment.



Effective Fire Response

Wildland fire impacts span across all jurisdictions and disciplines. Locally in Deschutes County all jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions. Implementing the two previous goals, resilient landscapes and fire adapted communities, allow for each respective jurisdiction to make better risk based management decisions.

CWPPs create an environment for relationship building between fire response agencies. Collaborative development of a risk assessment creates a holistic picture of the risk in each community by each jurisdiction.



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LEVELS



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Resources:

Deschutes County CWPPs www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps

FireFree www.firefree.org

Oregon Department of Forestry www.oregon.gov/odf

Firewise www.firewise.org

Fire Adapted Communities Network www.fireadaptednetwork.org

Fire Adapted Communities www.fireadapted.org

Project Wildfire is a Deschutes County community organization that facilitates, educates, disseminates, and maximizes community efforts toward effective fire planning. Project Wildfire's mission is to prevent deaths, injuries, property loss, and environmental damage due to wildfires in Deschutes County. We achieve this by building partnerships, sharing resources, and eliminating redundancies. Many of our goals are achieved by developing long-term wildfire prevention and education strategies designed to reach an ever-changing community.

This summary is based on the locally developed and maintained Community Wildfire Protection Plans, the full plans are available at www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps.